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The eastern Caucasus had been famous at least from Achæmenian times as the land of natural fires, and the neighbouring Persian province had borrowed the fame in its name Azerbaijan—*ader-badagan*, the "garden of fire". From the early days of the Arab rule in Shirvan extensive industrial use was made of the petroleum of the Apsheron peninsula. el-Masudi speaks of Baku and "the Naptha country", and Yakuti, himself a native of the place, states that two hundred mule loads a day were, in his time, exported. Marco Polo, who did not himself pass through the Caucasus, had heard tell of Baku oil.

> "On the confines towards Georgiana", he says, "there is a fountain from which oil springs in great abundance, insomuch that a hundred shiploads might be taken from it at one time. This oil is not good to use with food, but it's good to burn and is also used to anoint camels that have the mange. People come from a vast distance to fetch it, for in all the countries round, they have no other oil." [1]

Barbaro's description is as usual distinguished by a certain crude realism in detail.

> "Upon this side of the sea there is another citie called Bachu, whereof the sea of Bachu taketh name, neere unto which citie, there is a mountaigne that casteth foo'the blacke oyle stynkeng horryblye, which they nevertheless use for furnissheng of their lightes, and for the anoynteng of their camells, twies a yere. For if they were not anoynted they wolde become skabbie." [2]

Among products of a more special character, the people of the Caucasus were noted for their caviar,[3] their armour and their falcons. In parts of Daghestan, according to el-Masudi, "*most of the inhabitants are employed in making coats of mail, stirrups, bridles, swords and similar instruments of iron*".[4] Marco Polo had heard the fame of the bowmen of Georgia, and el-Masudi records that from the district of Shulaveri on the Armenian marches, came the prized battle-axes called "Shulaverdian"—"*which are in use with the Sia'bibah and other Barbarian corps*".[5] Again, Polo says of Georgia, that "*the country produces the best goshawks in the world, which are called Avighi*",[6] and el-Masudi has a dissertation on the falcons of the Caspian coasts and of Armenia.

[1] Polo (Yule), I, 46.
[2] Barbaro, 88.
[3] el-Masudi, I, 438.
[4] *Idem*, I, 433.
[5] *Idem*, I, 461, see *Encyclopædia of Islam* under Sayabidja, article by G. Fernand, who states that these people were pre-Islamic emigrants from Sumatra to India, and later to Iraq. They were generally employed by the Arabs as guards and gaolers.
[6] Polo (Yule), I, 50.

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"In this sea", he says, "are islands opposite the coast of Jorjan, where a sort of white falcons are caught. These falcons are soon made tame; and one has little to fear that they will associate (with the wild birds); but they are rather weak, for the sportsmen who catch them in these islands feed them with fish; and if any other food is given to them, they become reduced in strength. Men who distinguish themselves by their knowledge of falconry, and of the different sorts of rapacious birds which have been employed for the same purpose, among the Persians, Turks, Byzantines, Hindus and Arabs, say that falcons of a white colour are quickest and handsomest; that they have the best shape and chest; and that they are soonest tamed, and the strongest of all falcons to rise in the air; that they have the longest breath, and fly furthest, for they are very light and spirited, and they have a hotter temper than any other species of falcons. The difference of colour depends upon the difference of climate. Hence they are of pure white in Armenia, in the country of the Khazar, in Jorjan, and the neighbouring countries of the Turks, on account of the great fall of snow in these climates." [1]

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The Arab writers pay little attention to the western parts of the Caucasus, since the Euxine trade had little concern for them. They note only the names of the declining ports along the coast from Trebizond to the entry of the Sea of Azov. Phasis and Dioscurias had certainly lost much of their importance. Imier—"that side"—beyond the Mountains of Likhi and the marches of the Muslim—had been desolated in the long wars between the fifth and the eighth centuries; and the life of Georgia was growing young again, in the rock-bound fastnesses of Samtzkhé. Yet an extensive find—at the small roadstead of Arkhavé in Lazistan—of gold and silver coins minted in the cities of Islam—tells of the constant come and go of trade between the provinces of the Caliph and the independent parts of Georgia, during the generations when strife was continuing in perpetual iteration.

The coins found at Arkhavé all date to the beginning of the ninth century, and are *dirhems* minted at Baghdad, Muhammadiah, in Armenia, at Kufa, at Basra, in Aran, at Balkh, in Africa, at Harunabad, Ray and Kirman.[2] This was the circulation of trade under the great Caliphs—from Africa and Balkh to Lazica. Sargis Tmogveli, three centuries later, recalls the fame of it when he exclaims:

"Thou art master of Eran and T'uran; from China to Qirovan, all is thine and under thy command." [3]

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[1] el-Masudi, I, 423.

[2] Pakhomov, p. 55; cf. ibn-Haukal, p. 165: "In Azerbaijan and Aran and Armenia, gold and silver coins are current."

[3] *Vitrumiani*, p. 160, Qiroven is Kerouan in Tunisia.